

the estimated 30,000 jobs that manufacture those exports.

The Bank is essential to the communities, constituents, and businesses in my district. Whether it's in Elgin or Aurora, Batavia, or west Chicago, companies and their employees are benefitting.

I wish to thank my friend from New Jersey, Representative ROBERT MENENDEZ, for joining me in making this a priority. I'm delighted that the Chief Deputy Whips from each side of the aisle can come together in making this a bipartisan effort.

IN COMMEMORATION OF
UKRAINE'S 6TH ANNIVERSARY
OF INDEPENDENCE

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 17, 1997

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in observance of the 6th anniversary of Ukrainian independence.

On August 24, 1991, the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet declared Ukraine's independence from the then Soviet Union. The declaration was confirmed several months later through a public referendum in which 90 percent of Ukraine's citizens voted in favor of independence. At the same time, Ukraine elected its first president.

Since then, Ukraine has labored hard to transform itself from a Communist controlled republic to a democratic and free market country. This has not been an easy task. Unemployment and inflation have run rampant throughout Ukraine. Shortages of food and other essentials are common. And in many cases wages often go unpaid for months.

However, throughout this long ordeal Ukrainians have remained committed to reforming their country. Ukraine is one of only a few of the former Communist dominated countries to have a peaceful transition of power. In 1991 and 1994, Ukraine held successful elections for both president and parliament without violence or bloodshed. Furthermore, Ukraine's Parliament, the Rada, adopted its first post-Communist constitution last year guaranteeing future free and fair democratic elections.

Ukraine has also shown a strong commitment to peace and regional stability. For instance, Ukraine is in full compliance of all reductions in force under the Conventional Forces in Europe Agreement. Early this year, NATO and Ukraine entered into a charter that will ensure cooperation between the alliance and Ukraine on all regional security issues including peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. However, most importantly, Ukraine agreed unilaterally to dismantle its entire nuclear arsenal, the third largest in the world at the time, and sign as a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Under the leadership of President Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine has instituted a rigorous economic reform plan. Already this plan has helped to lower the inflation from an overwhelming rate of 10,000 percent in 1993 to an anticipated level of 25 percent this year. It has also led to the privatization of nearly 50,000 state-run small and medium sized industries.

This progress has not come without controversy. Like many former Communist coun-

tries Ukraine has had a difficult time dealing with graft and corruption among government officials. This has caused a great deal of concern among United States and other foreign investors who have had great difficulties doing business in Ukraine because of the lack of firm laws and regulations guarding against abuse of power. The government of Ukraine realizes the seriousness of this problem and has taken steps to correct the problems expressed by foreign investors and clean up corruption within the government. For example, President Kuchma announced a clean hands anti-corruption campaign which has resulted in a large shakeup at the highest levels of government within Ukraine. In addition, Ukraine's president has also established an advisory committee made up of Ukrainians, foreign investors, and President Kuchma to deal with investor complaints in an efficient and timely manner.

I view these as steps in the right direction, but clearly more needs to be done. Specifically, I encourage the Ukrainian Rada to adopt comprehensive legal reforms that will protect investors from unscrupulous officials seeking individual profit.

The United States has been a major partner in Ukraine's success and should continue to play a major role.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to continue to support aid to Ukraine so that we may continue to celebrate the occasion of a free and democratic Ukraine for years to come.

A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE,
SENATOR ROBERT D. WETMORE

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 17, 1997

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a valuable Massachusetts State legislator, Senator Robert D. Wetmore. On September 28, 1997, colleagues, family, and friends will gather to toast Senator Wetmore's distinguished career in the Massachusetts General Court. Allow me to inaugurate this celebration early by introducing Senator Wetmore and his accomplishments to this House.

Robert Wetmore dedicated his entire career toward serving others. Even before his 32 years in elected office, he committed himself to his colleagues as a head lineman for the Massachusetts Electric Co. and by presiding over the local union. In 1965, he first entered the Massachusetts General Court as a State representative. In addition to his participation on several standing committees, the combination of his innovativeness, foresight, and abilities, allowed him to steer several new initiatives. Among these are his participation on the Bicentennial Commission and the Special Commission on Bike Paths. His leadership in identifying the effects of growth patterns on the quality of life in the commonwealth placed him on the vanguard of proactive government by foreseeing issues and precluding problems.

In 1977, Mr. Wetmore entered the Massachusetts senate. He would continue to serve the people of the Worcester, Hampton, Hampshire, and Franklin districts, and the institution, for 10 terms. Beyond chairing and vice-chairing several standing committees, he con-

tinued to identify new areas of specialization and organize committees to address these issues.

Senator Wetmore subscribes to one of life's lessons that I hold dear to my own heart: It is not enough to leave a place the way you found it—you should leave it better. Were a person only to strive for this in private life, it would undoubtedly win other's trust and praise. When someone such as Robert Wetmore makes this his public mission in the General Court, everyone in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reaps the benefits. As a lifelong Massachusetts resident, I too, owe Senator Wetmore a debt of gratitude.

I ask all the Members of this House to join me in recognizing this dedicated public servant.

ONCE AGAIN, THE NEED FOR TORT
REFORM IS EVIDENT

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 17, 1997

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, a jury in New Orleans, LA, last week has given us a prime example of this country's need for serious tort reform. Ten years after a tank car fire, CSX Transportation was hit with a \$2.5 billion punitive damages verdict for this incident in which it was considered blameless by the National Transportation Safety Board.

No matter who was at fault, such an enormous punitive damages award in this case would still be out of line, because there were no deaths or serious injuries as a result of the fire. But to make matters worse, every governmental authority that reviewed this incident, from the city of New Orleans to the National Transportation Safety Board, found no fault with CSXT. In fact, the city of New Orleans issued a proclamation recognizing the individuals from CSXT who prevented the fire from spreading for their heroic actions.

Certainly local residents were inconvenienced because of the evacuation, but it was the trial lawyers who filed a class action lawsuit before the fire was even put out that convinced the jury to reach into the deepest pocket in the lawsuit, not the parties who were responsible.

Punitive damages in our legal system are supposed to punish egregious behavior, but Mr. Speaker, in this case what was the jury possibly punishing? These high cost punitive damage awards must be reigned in, from the McDonald's hot coffee case to the bad paint job on the BMW, the consumers are actually the ones who will feel the belt-tightening because of the lack of tort reform laws.

TRIBUTE TO TIFFANY MONROY

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 17, 1997

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House the speech of Ms. Tiffany Monroy, a student at Sacred Heart Academy of Honolulu, which won the Voice of Democracy competition